

COIL PERFINs OF GREAT BRITAIN

by Tony Edwards

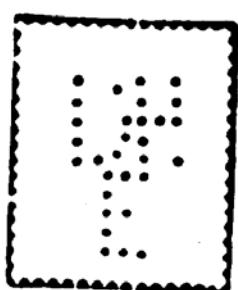
Part 1

The first recorded use of perfinned coil stamps occurred in 1910 the British post office was in discussion with British Electric Automatic Machines who wished to introduce the BEAM/POKO machine into the United Kingdom. Details of the discussion presumably focused on the supply of suitable coils of stamps for the machines as permission to perfine stamps was not required. A trial was taken using testing labels perf 16 x 14 with a design depicting the head of T R Harrison above the inscription "HARRISON & SONS / PRINTERS LONDON W.C".

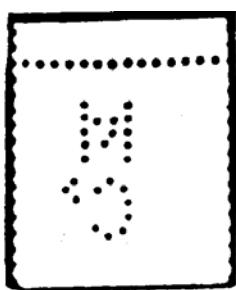
The trials were perfinned DH/E in rather large letters (see Figure 1). The perfins probably belonged to the firm DH Evans, a large London Departmental Store, which was listed as a customer of British Electric Automatic Machines Ltd., and which used similar perfins. It would seem that the trials were successful as there is record of these perfins on postage stamps.

There is evidence of other types of machine in use in this country in the years following these trials and stamps are known from the issues current in 1912 with distinct signs of machine cut perforations. The earliest noted to date is the perfins WB on a George V 1d (Scott 152) which is illustrated as figure 2.

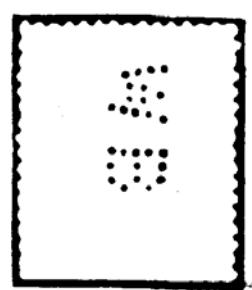
A very badly miscut item (see Figure 3) on a George V 2d (Scott 162) shows that these stamps came from a vertical format coil and a number of less badly aligned stamps confirm this. This item shows the three impaling pins of the 'FIXO' machine.



(1)



(2)



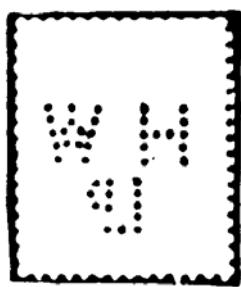
(3)

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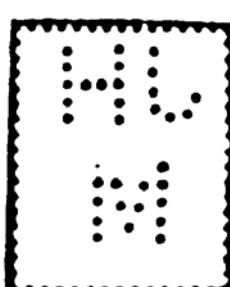
The FIXO machine patent is dated 1912 but it is known used to affix stamps of Edward VII so it is in these issues that even earlier coil perfins should be sought. The perfin HW/Ltd is common with cut perforations and examples are known with characteristic miss-cut edges on both vertical and horizontal edges (see Figure 4). However this perfin is also well known without cut edges and it may be that the users did not employ a coil fixing machine, but some sort of mechanical cutter to separate sheet stamps before hand fixing. These items date from 1903

Another characteristic group from this period which have cut perforations are perfins with large letters and large holes (see Figure 5). These seen to date from about 1905. A list of perfins on Edward VII stamps with misaligned cut edges is given below at the end of this article, but most if not all of these will be the result of the use of mechanical cutters to separate sheets rather from the use of affixing machines with unofficial coils.

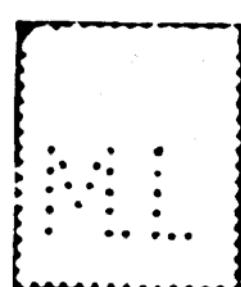
It is in the next reign that post office coils were first produced and we can be more certain that clipped edges indicate coil stamps. In 1912 rolls of stamps were available for use at post offices in automatic vending machines but they were also available to the general public on request. Originally the coils were made up by separating normal sheets and joining the strips, but in 1913 stamps were produced specially for coils. These were made by reel printing on continuous rolls of paper and were perforated with a five row comb perforating machine before being separated into vertical format rolls.



(4)



(5)

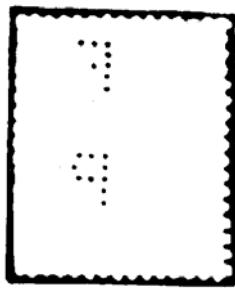


(6)

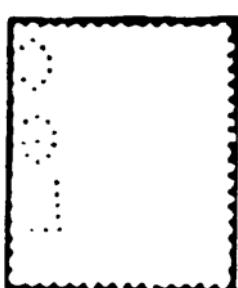
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The first roll stamps were the Multiple Script Cypher watermarked ½d and 1d issues of George V (die III) control C13 which were issued as coils in August 1913 (Die II with this watermark was issued in sheets the previous year). In March 1915 a better quality "currency paper" was introduced for coil production which produced sideways watermark stamps. These coils were for sideways format vending Machines, but a number of examples are known perfined.

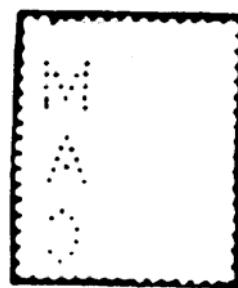
Early sideways watermark stamps must come from coils so we should look at this group. Two quite distinct perfins formats appear on sideways watermark coil stamps. The first is upright in the form X/X/X (although X/X and X are known). Stamps from this group show curved separation cuts characteristic of the Multipost Affixing machine so were probably associated with it in some way if not actually produced by it. They appear in the George V typographed period which coincides with the known date of introduction of this machine. Some strips are known which show that the perfins are irregularly spaced on the roll which lends weight to the theory that the stamps were perfined prior to use in the machine rather than by the machine as has been previously suggested. Examples are shown below as figures 7 to 9.



(7)



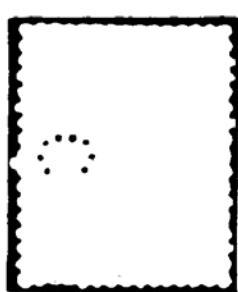
(8)



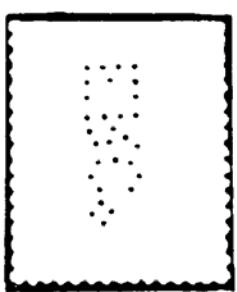
(9)

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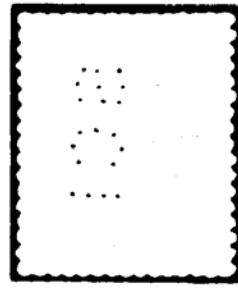
The second group with sideways watermark are perfined sideways, usually with XXX format, but the single letter 'C' is probably one of this group as are those with 'Co' in place of the last letter. These first appear later than the previous group on George V photogravure issues and may be from another machine or from a different perfin machine used in conjunction with the same affixing machine. Typical examples are illustrated below as figures 10 to 14.



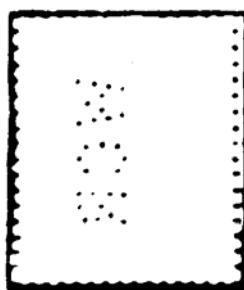
(10)



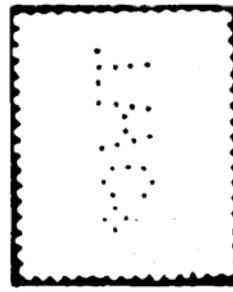
(11)



(12)



(13)

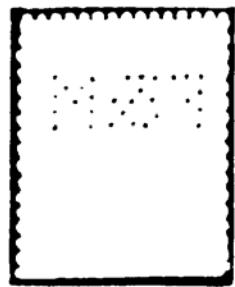


(14)

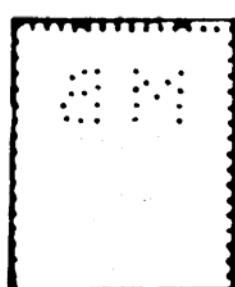
Both post office and unofficial coils were made up at times from sheets of stamps so upright watermarked stamps can originate from sideways feeding coils on Multipost or similar machines. Indeed stamps with upright watermarks and dipped edges suggesting sideways feed machines are known. These have the typical format perfins as found on sideways watermarked stamps. They often show the typical curved separation cuts.

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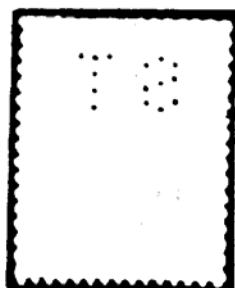
A further group of perfin types are known on vertical watermark stamps which, from the evidence of misaligned cutters, appear to be from vertically fed coils. These are not unlike standard POKO designs, but the perfins are smaller with Sloper like letters and the format XXX appears sometimes. These appear to originate from yet another type of perfin machine used in conjunction with an affixing machine. Typical examples are illustrated as figures 17 to 20.



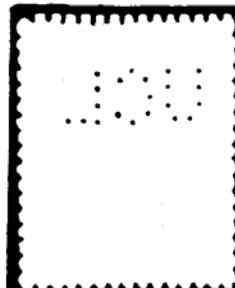
(17)



(18)



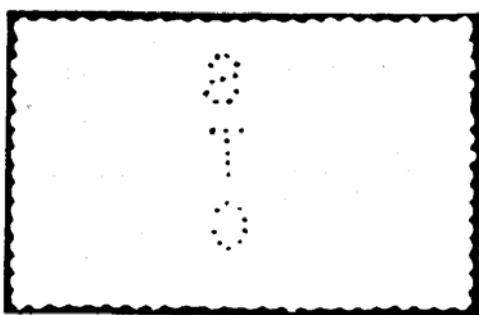
(19)



(20)

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Not all perfins of the X/X/X format are from coils however as S/T/C (Fig. 15) is known on a block of four and a large format high face value, but most are. Perhaps this type of perfin machine was sold with the affixing machine but some tines used without it.



(15)

Vertical watermarked vertically fed coil stamps from the FIXO machine must not be confused with vertically watermarked sideways fed items from the Multipost machine. The example illustrated as Figure 2 is a typical FIXO design and is so identified by its three impaling pin marks. Not all examples show these marks however and when they are not noticeable items must be identified by misaligned separation cuts and typical perfin design. An interesting example probably from this machine is B/D/H which is known used both postally and fiscally showing misaligned cutters. See Figure 16.



(16)

(To be continued in the next Edition.)